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Memo, Cully Cobb to Chester Davis; 1/28/1936

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January 28, 1936

MEMORANDUM TO MR. CHESTER C. DAVIS,
Administrator.

Dear Mr. Davis:

Anticipating the continuation of the work begun under the Agricultural Adjustment Administration as it apparently will have to be carried out under the proposed amendments to the Soil Conservation Act, and thinking in terms of a new and regional approach as well as more definite State relationships, it seems proper to set out the situation in the Cotton Belt at the present time as it relates to organization.

At the outset in the Cotton Belt in 1933, the Extension Service of the Land-Grant Colleges was selected as the appropriate State body to administer the cotton program. The fact that the eleven principal cotton-producing States are all contiguous; that the cotton crop is the principal crop and principal livelihood of the majority of farmers in these States; that there is complete community of interest, at the beginning provided and now provides all the fundamentals necessary to a continuing successful regional approach.

The further fact that the entire Extension Service of every cotton State is cooperating wholeheartedly in the administration of the program and has done so from the beginning leads me to the conviction that with very slight readjustment the plan heretofore used is about what we need for the new program. If this is adopted, I am convinced that we can administer the new program more efficiently, more effectively and more economically than would be possible under any other procedure.

If this suggestion should be carried out, we would avoid the necessity of developing new relationships, would avoid duplication of administrative functions and can shift to the new approach with utmost ease. The type of cooperation we have had during the past three years, and which I am convinced our associates in the Cotton Belt would be only too happy to continue, can undoubtedly be expected to administer the new program with even greater economy than has been the case with the old program, in spite of the fact that it was administered with commendable economy and efficiency.

Under the arrangement we have had, there has been a central office, usually at the College of Agriculture, presided over by an individual selected to direct activities in connection with the cotton program, subject to administrative approval by the Director of Extension work.

In these State offices there have been sufficient assistants and clerical workers to carry out the program in the States. Also under cooperative arrangement there has been an assistant in each county office

whose immediate task first was to administer the details of the Bankhead Act, but who in addition to that has helped with the program as a whole. These assistants were appointed at salaries ranging from \$1260. per year minimum to \$2000. per year maximum. All these employees have been required to execute bonds for \$3500.

Contact with farmers has been maintained through a county association consisting of farmers selected by their neighbors at community meetings called for that purpose. The men selected in these community meetings were called community committeemen. These community committeemen in turn selected county committees of three. In the original set-up in 1933, these committeemen were selected by the county agents. In each of the years since 1933, the committees have been elected. For the most part, there have been few changes, either in community committee personnel or in county committee personnel. All committee compensation was on a uniform basis of \$3.00 per day, without automobile or other allowance, and all were paid direct from Washington upon properly approved payrolls. Through this procedure we have achieved maximum efficiency, have avoided many complications, and have been able to hold expenditures to a minimum.

Under this plan I am convinced we can carry out the program at a cost of 50 cents on the dollar, as compared with any other yet tried, and with no sacrifice whatever in efficiency or democracy of operation.

From the beginning we have kept a careful monthly check through itemized monthly statements of expenditures. This has also served as a partial guide in determining administrative action.

During the past three years county and State offices throughout the Cotton Belt have collected a vast amount of accurate and important data on the utilization of land in crop production on all farms covered by contracts or applications for Bankhead allotments, with which they are, of course, fully familiar. This information has been carefully compiled and is available for immediate use.

There is in every county a trained personnel whose services can be utilized in explaining the new plan and advising as to how farmers may utilize the same in their operations in order to cooperate in the soil improvement and soil conservation program.

I have presented the plan of operation employed in the Cotton Belt in order that you may have something definite before you for consideration when the problem involving operation in the cotton States is up for decision in the future.

Sincerely yours,

C. A. Cobb,
Director, Division of Cotton.